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Friends, Society of - Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
An Epistle - 1853

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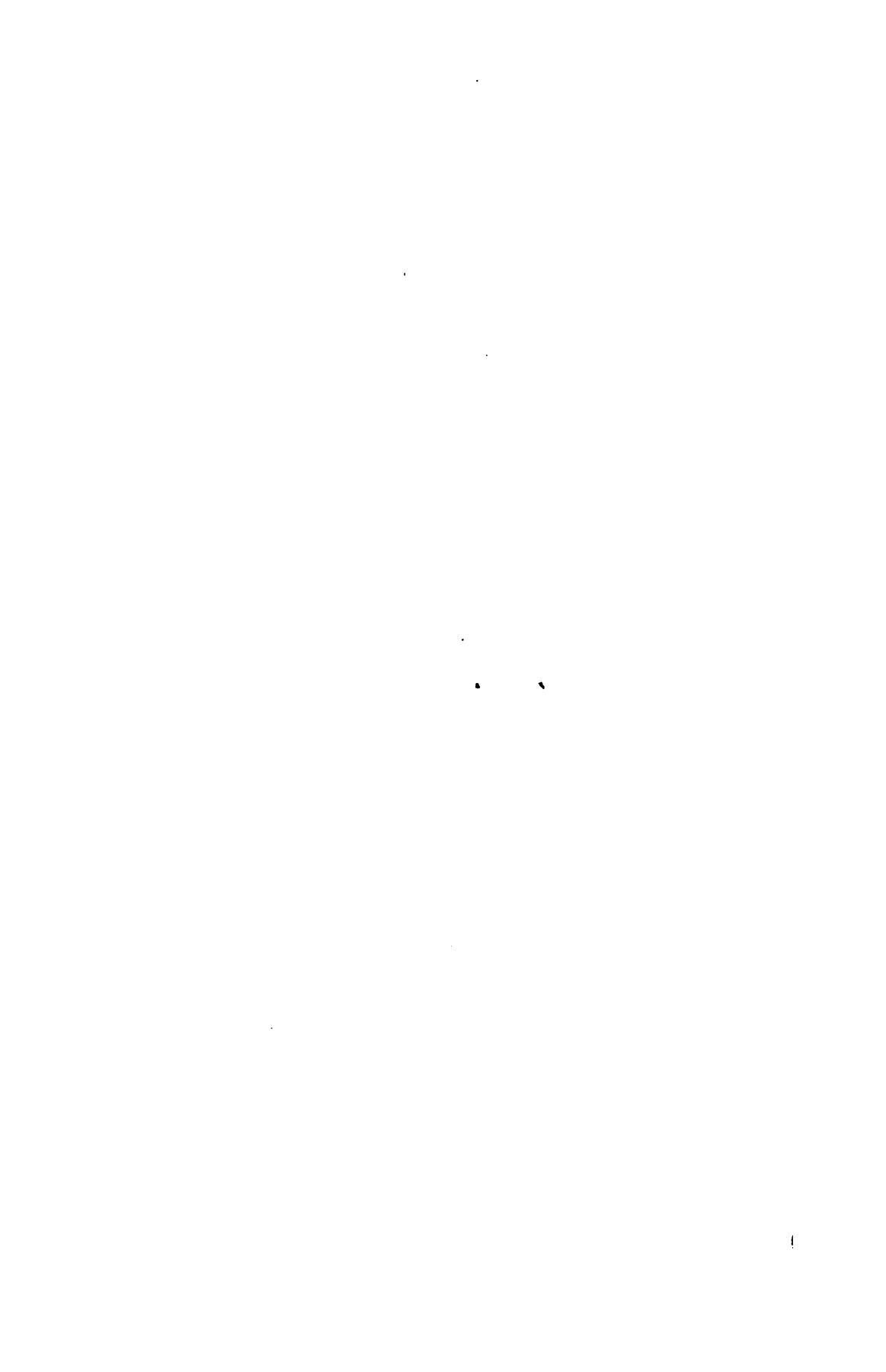


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AN EPISTLE
OF
AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL,
ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS
BY THE
YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,
HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,
AND PUBLISHED BY ITS DIRECTION.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY JOSEPH BAKERSTRAW, APPLE-TREE ALLEY.

1853.



A N EPISTLE

OR

AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL,

ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS

BY THE

YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,

HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,

BY ADJOURNMENTS, FROM THE 18TH TO THE 22ND OF THE
FOURTH MONTH, 1853;

AND PUBLISHED BY ITS DIRECTION.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY JOSEPH RAKESTRAW, APPLE-TREE ALLEY.

1853.

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JAN 9 1936

At a Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia, by adjournments, from the 18th of the Fourth month, to the 22nd of the same, inclusive, 1853:—

The Meeting for Sufferings having been drawn, under religious concern for the welfare of our members, to prepare an Epistle of Caution and Counsel on various important subjects relating to the support of our principles and testimonies in life and conversation, it was deliberately read and considered; and much unity with it being felt and expressed, the Epistle was adopted by the meeting, and the clerk directed to sign it on our behalf. It is our affectionate desire that all may apply to themselves individually the salutary counsel it conveys, and be afresh incited to diligence and faithfulness in fulfilling their religious duties.

The Meeting for Sufferings is directed to have printed at least a sufficient number to supply our members; and the subordinate meetings are desired to give the necessary attention to the distribution within their respective limits.

Extracted from the minutes,

WILLIAM EVANS,

Clerk to the meeting this year.

AN EPISTLE

OR

AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL,

&c. &c.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Our minds being drawn at this time into a consideration of the temptations and trials by which our unwearied adversary is striving to alienate the members of our Religious Society from a faithful, upright walking in the Truth, and to beguile the young people into the corruptions that abound in the world, we feel engaged to address you in the love of the gospel, in order to stir up the pure mind by way of remembrance of the many obligations we owe to our Heavenly Father, and to encourage you to increasing dedication and faithfulness in the support of the Christian testimonies we are called to bear.

It is now about two hundred years since the first Friends began to publish, in their primitive clearness and force, the blessed doctrines of the Lord Jesus and his apostles. Having been brought themselves to

know by experience, that nothing but his power, who is the resurrection and the life, can quicken the soul that is dead in trespasses and sin, give it a true sense of its lost condition, and as it yields to the workings of the grace of God, "deliver it from the power of darkness, and translate it into the kingdom of his dear Son;" they called upon men with divine authority to receive and obey the light wherewith Christ Jesus has enlightened them, by which, in the obedience of faith, he would give them the victory over the world, the flesh and the devil.

In yielding to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, many felt a true hunger and thirst after righteousness, and were led, in the silence of all flesh, to wait upon the Lord for the further unfoldings of his will, and to be fed with the living bread that comes down from Him, by which their souls were nourished and kept alive unto God. Herein they experienced the communion of the Holy Ghost, the participation of the body and blood of Christ, and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Son of God, they were made living witnesses of his power and coming in their hearts, and received from Him, who alone is the author of it, saving faith in Himself and in the manifestations of his Spirit in them, and also became true believers in all the doctrines of the gospel as laid down in the Holy Scriptures.

Under the discipline of the cross of Christ, which crucified them to the world and the world to them,

Friends saw that the gospel is a dispensation of divine life and power, revealed for the regeneration and sanctification of the soul, in which mere ceremonial performances have no place, but the way is opened "into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh." Thus they were prepared to worship God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh; and to receive from him clear views of the nature of his government in his church, and in every individual member of it.

We have always believed that the worship of God is inward and spiritual, daily experienced in the heart of every true believer; and that it is also our duty to assemble at particular times for the performance of it, as a public acknowledgment of the gratitude and homage we owe to our Heavenly Father for his abundant mercies and gifts bestowed upon us, and to unite in a harmonious travail of spirit before him for the renewal of our strength, and according to his will, to exercise the gifts of ministry, prayer and praise for the edification of one another, and the glory of his great name. These gifts we believe are only dispensed by Him who ascended up on high, and who still condescends, in his goodness and love, to give them to those whom he has prepared by the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire to receive them, and they are to be occupied under his immediate putting forth, in the work unto which he calls. When thus occupied, the

ministry and vocal prayers of such will be a savour of life, and in a greater or less degree will baptize into the Holy Spirit, to the refreshing of the living members, and at times to the awakening of some who are in a state of forgetfulness of God.

The true and acceptable worship of Almighty God, and a pure gospel ministry, are duties and services of unspeakable importance to the welfare and preservation of our Religious Society in the life and power, and practice of godliness. We have been brought to feel deeply under the fear that through the enervating influences of the spirit of the world, the zeal of many has grown cold, and their practice dwindled into little more than the form of going to their meetings once a week, in others not so often, while some almost totally neglect them. In relation to the ministry, the ranks of this class have become thin, but few coming forth in that weighty work; may we not fear from the minds of so great a proportion of the members, being immersed in their temporal concerns, or captivated by the love of ease, and taking their delight in sensual gratification.

If all our members were concerned for their own salvation, so that it was the object of their first and most earnest pursuit, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we believe they could not be easy to stay away from their religious meetings, but would feel constrained to endeavour to surmount all obstacles, in order to present themselves with their brethren and

sisters, for the performance of this solemn duty. We think there cannot be found among us a truly awakened individual, who, if able, is not impelled from a sense of religious duty to attend our meetings for divine worship, and that wherever there is a wilful neglect of them, it is an evidence that such have gone from the Truth, and are in bondage to the hard task-master, who is leading them further and further into insensibility of heart, which if not arrested, must terminate in spiritual blindness, and the utter forsaking of the living God.

In this day of outward prosperity the way is opened for many to indulge themselves and their children in luxury and grandeur, by which they are led into association with those who disregard the duty of self-denial. Thus, the company of faithful consistent Friends, and the attendance of our meetings for worship, which are often held in silence, become irksome to them, and they are liable to be caught with a showy ceremonial worship and a popular hired ministry, which our predecessors in the Truth rejected, and against which, through great sufferings, they bore a faithful Christian testimony. It is mournful to see any forsaking the faith and the worship of our forefathers, and we are persuaded that they suffer a loss which no worldly consideration can compensate or repair, and that a heavy accountability will attach to parents, who, by their wrong indulgence, lay the foundation for the departure of the young people into the ways and customs of the world. If parents pursue a

course of life at variance with our religious principles, how can we expect the dear children to make choice of the Truth, unless the Lord in tender mercy awakens them to see the defection of their parents, and compels them by his love to enter through the strait gate into the narrow way that leads to life.

We feel renewedly engaged to call upon those who are unfaithful to their Redeemer, and do not confess him in all their ways, solemnly to reflect upon the consequences which must come upon themselves, and the prejudicial influence their example must have upon others. In pleading with the house of Israel, who were compared to a vineyard planted with the choicest vine in a very fruitful hill, the Lord said, "what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Have we not as a religious Society been highly favoured, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, to see the emptiness of all worldly enjoyment that is out of the Truth, and to behold the heavenly nature of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and that it is by the love of God shed abroad in the soul by the Holy Ghost, we are prepared to be employed in glorifying Him and exalting the kingdom of Christ? Shall we not be responsible for the unspeakable gifts bestowed, and the superior advantages conferred, in being released from dependence on human means in the work of salvation, and from all rites and ceremonies that make nothing perfect? The noble vine, wholly a

right seed has been planted among us, and the Lord has placed a hedge about us, both by the circumscribing dictates of his Spirit in the heart, the precious testimonies he has given us to bear, and also by a discipline established in the wisdom of Truth. But how have we regarded these blessings and profited by them? Has not the hedge been overleaped or broken down by many? Has not the ancient zeal which was founded in the knowledge and obedience of the Lord's will, and which, under the fresh anointing of his Spirit, made the faithful steadfast to their meetings for worship, and in the support of the discipline of the Society, greatly abated with some? Is the ministry as generally attended with the life and baptizing power of Truth as it was formerly? And do the elders and overseers, and other members employed in the services of Society, experience that deep indwelling with the Seed of divine life in themselves, by which alone any can be made quick of understanding and discernment in the things of God, and qualified to judge righteous judgment?

We are thankful in believing there are preserved throughout our borders, exercised Friends who are endeavouring to show forth in life and practice and conversation, their allegiance to the King of kings, and the saving efficacy of his holy religion. The strength and perseverance of these in the path of duty we greatly desire. The Lord's mercy and goodness we believe are not withdrawn, notwithstanding the degeneracy of many, but as a shepherd watcheth his

flock by day and by night, to defend and to nourish them, so the everlasting Shepherd and Bishop of souls is graciously regarding us, and seeking to gather by his love and power, the children of this people into his fold, and to prepare them by the discipline of the cross to show forth his praise. Did they unreservedly submit to the convicting, heart-tendering Spirit of their Holy Redeemer, many more than are now in his blessed service, would be brought to feed in the pastures of life, and to invite others to come, taste and see that he is good, and that his compassions fail not. May you, dear young Friends, let the King of glory come into your hearts and enamour you with the beauty of his holiness, and the value of an inheritance incorruptible among the saints in light. No earthly possessions or enjoyments are worthy to be compared with the joys of his salvation, which are the solace of the obedient soul under all the tribulations of this life. Herein man is raised up from a state of spiritual death, and clothed with that dignity and honour which come from God only, whereby he is made to glorify him here, and to partake of the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

Where there is a neglect of our meetings for divine worship, we would encourage Friends to labour with their negligent brethren and sisters in the restoring spirit of Christ, and endeavour to impress them with the obligations they owe to their Creator, to assemble for the purpose of worshiping him in spirit and in truth, by which their growth and comfort in the life

of godliness will be enlarged. And when gathered in our religious assemblies, let us be truly concerned to watch against every thought and imagination which have a tendency to divert the mind from simplicity of desire after the Father of spirits and Fountain of all good. Thus retiring to the divine and heavenly gift, it will minister to every condition, though we may have no outward teaching; and will preserve in humble waiting upon the Lord, until it be a proper time to close the meeting with that decency and solemnity which should attend our minds in such service. May the weightiness of our spirits and deportment in our religious meetings be such, as to produce sensations of awfulness in observers; and at the conclusion, may we avoid trivial or unnecessary conversation; our conduct as well as countenances bespeaking that we have been with Jesus.

Much advantage has arisen at times from family visits, entered into under a sense of duty, whereby some have been aroused to more diligence, love has been called forth towards their friends who have extended the care, and the fellowship of the meeting has been increased. We desire that faithful Friends may stand open to the leadings of divine love to engage in this service, not looking too much at their own weakness, or the weight of the work, but to the Lord alone, who as he is waited on, will in due season, furnish wisdom and strength for the service.

Inasmuch as it hath pleased the Lord to anoint and

qualify servants and handmaids in our religious Society for the work of the ministry, we believe it is of great importance to them and to the church, that they be faithful in occupying the gifts committed to their trust. It is only as these abide in humility and reverent waiting upon the Lord, knowing him to put them forth, and to supply them with what he designs they should convey to others, that they can be made and preserved ministers of his word, and enabled to baptize their hearers into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Man by his talents and learning cannot preach baptizingly to the states of the people; but the humble dependent servant, whom He has ordained for the work, and who has the sentence of death in himself not to trust in himself, but in God that raiseth the dead, will receive power from time to time, in the fresh openings of divine life, to do his Lord's will, and to feed the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer.

Let us, dear friends, hold fast this ancient profession of our faith without wavering, that the ministry may be kept pure, and in the renewed quickening virtue of the heavenly life, that it may be felt not to stand in word only, but in power, and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost. Let none despise the gift committed to them, though they may think it small, but in faith and simple obedience, answer the requirings of their Divine Master, and they will be blessed, and be made a blessing to others. Thus we may hope to see the ranks of the Lamb's army

filling up—a righteous zeal revive and spread among us, for the honour of our God, to gather souls to Him, and to build up one another on our most holy faith.

We also believe that those who are placed in the station of Elders cannot fulfil the duties of that weighty office in the church, but as they receive the spirit of discernment from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Unless this is waited for and acted under, mistakes may be made by which wrong things are supported, and the humble careful traveller may be cast down and discouraged. The wisdom that is from above, that is pure and gentle, is profitable to direct in all things, and to those who rightly seek for it, will be a spirit of sound judgment, qualifying them to administer counsel and admonition, and strength, according to the case in which they may be called to act. We believe that loss is sustained, where those placed in this important station are not thoroughly baptized for the service they have been appointed to; and it is our desire, that being brought to feel their own insufficiency, they may be engaged to wait upon the Lord, for the anointing of his Spirit, that they may act for his honour and the benefit of the church.

The right discharge of the arduous duties which belong to overseers, must necessarily bring them under much exercise of mind, if they are faithful to their trust. We feel much sympathy with them, and desire they may keep a single eye to the Lord, to receive direction and help from him to extend that care to the

members which their respective circumstances require, both in warning and in seeking to reclaim those who are negligent of their religious duties, and in timely taking up the cases of those who transgress the discipline. Where they act from a conscientious concern to support our testimonies, being examples to the flock, and seeking to promote its real welfare, the work will be prospered in their hands, accompanied with the reward of divine approbation.

The discipline and government established among us have been instituted by the great Head of the church, through the unfoldings of his Spirit to his devoted servants. Their right administration has been a means in the divine hand, of bringing into service gifts for the edification of the body, and has tended to preserve it from decay, and from losing its strength, and its usefulness to the members and to the world. As the work is the Lord's, and cannot be done to his praise and to the health of the body, but by his holy help, it is our affectionate desire that all who take part in it may be gathered in the name of Christ, that they may know him to be in the midst, apportioning to every one his service, and furnishing wisdom to direct and strengthen them in upholding the doctrines and testimonies he has appointed us to support.

If we fully believe that we cannot be preserved from the evils that beset our daily walk, but by yielding unreservedly to the leadings and restraints of the

Holy Spirit, how certain it is that in conducting the affairs of the church, in the promotion of the cause of Christ, we must, if we labour availingly, be clothed upon with a measure of the same spirit, and each seek to know his proper place and service in the body, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" standing "fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Our meetings for discipline would then be felt to be seasons of close watchfulness, in order to receive counsel from the blessed Head of the church, and to move in the weighty concerns of his work under his direction, so that they may be disposed of, in the wisdom that is from above, without being marred by the unsanctified will or the contrivance of man.

The presence and government of Christ in these meetings being thus acknowledged and felt, the decisions they come to are in a measure of his authority, and whether for the preservation and encouragement of the upright hearted, for the restoration of delinquents, or the disownment of irreclaimable offenders, it will tend to the strength of the members and the edification of the meeting.

George Fox repeatedly and earnestly exhorted his brethren to hold all their meetings in the power of God, and this would now be their condition, did all our members live in conformity with the high profession we make. But as the spirit of the world takes the

16 JOINING IN BENEVOLENT OR OTHER ASSOCIATIONS.

place of that heavenly power, the life and authority which the Truth alone gives will lessen, and the members fail to obtain the many advantages, which it is the design of our Holy Head should be derived from the excellent system of church government he instituted among us. How needful is it then, dear friends, that all should exercise a godly jealousy over themselves, lest they seek to dispose of those weighty affairs in their own will and wisdom, instead of humbly endeavouring to manage them in the peaceable spirit and wisdom of Jesus.

We would also affectionately caution all our members to be careful how they join in association with men of the world, and those who do not support our Christian testimonies, either for purposes of benevolence, or for the promotion of private or public interests. It is our earnest desire that those who think it their place to take part in such associations, may deeply feel the paramount importance of being continually on the watch, neither directly nor indirectly to sanction that which is in anywise inconsistent with the requisitions and the clear views of the gospel of Christ, which our Society is called to uphold. While mingling in these associations, unless the watch is religiously maintained, in humble dependence upon the Lord for preservation, there is great danger of our becoming so leavened by the spirits of those around us, that when we come into our meetings for discipline, we may be led by the force of habit or example, to conduct and decide their affairs in the same spirit,

and by the same standard which they have been accustomed to see prevail elsewhere. May then all our dear friends be willing to receive the word of exhortation, to be very guarded how they place themselves in the way of danger, and narrowly to watch lest they fall into the evils we have referred to.

But while concerned thus to caution these, we would incite all to a faithful support of the discipline, and encourage the burden bearers not to grow weary in the discharge of duty, while labouring in their respective meetings to uphold the precious cause of Truth, and to keep out of the camp that which tends to lay waste or to defile.

We would also encourage our beloved young friends who have entered into covenant with their Lord, when they feel the gentle putting forth of his spirit in these meetings to speak a word to the subject before them, to be faithful in humble dedication, and they will receive their reward, become a comfort to their exercised Friends, and thereby grow in the Truth.

It is important in making appointments to the weighty services of the Church, that Friends should exercise a proper discrimination, seeking in this as in their other movements, to act in conformity with that wisdom which is profitable to direct: and where any are delegated to visit, on behalf of the Church, those who require its care, it is our earnest desire they may seek for a right qualification to perform the service,

that so the precious cause of Truth may be upheld in the spirit of restoring love, and if the labour be not successful in bringing the wanderer back into the fold, it may carry conviction to the mind, that Friends have acted under a sense of religious duty, and leave a feeling of kindness and respect towards the Society. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

George Fox in speaking of meetings for discipline says, their design is to promote charity and piety. As this is kept in view, these meetings, under the influence of Christian love, as well as those for divine worship, will become more and more occasions for the increase of faith and spiritual strength; and all seeking to know their proper allotments, will find that according to the measure of grace received, they have a responsible station to occupy, the younger and less experienced rendering due deference to their elders who were in Christ before them, and who are over them in the Lord; the gifts conferred will be exercised in meekness and condescension, with a single eye to the good of each other, and to the honour of Him who is the Head, even Christ, "from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Stephen Crisp, writing on this subject, says, "It is

no man's learning or artificial acquirements, it is no man's riches or greatness in this world, no man's eloquence or natural wisdom that makes him fit for government in the Church of Christ; unless he with all his endowments be seasoned with the heavenly salt, his spirit subjected and his gifts pass through the fire of God's altar, a sacrifice to his praise and honour, that so self may be crucified and baptized into death, and the gifts made use of in the power of the resurrection of the life of Jesus in him. When this great work is wrought in a man, then all his gifts and qualifications are sanctified, and they are made use of for the good of the body, which is the Church, and are as ornaments and jewels, which serve for the joy and comfort of all, who are partakers of the same divine fellowship of life in Christ Jesus our Lord; and thus many come to be fitted and furnished to good works, which are brought forth in their due season for the edification of the weak, and for repairing the decayed places, and also for defence of the feeble, that hurtful things may not come near them."

It is a day in which the spirit of infidelity in various delusive forms is captivating many, by setting them to investigate the groundless pretensions of unstable men to some new discovery of truth, with which the father of lies is seeking to lay waste the unchangeable doctrines of the gospel, and faith in the alone means of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The prevalent opinion that it is a period for inquiry and research, and that before any scheme, however absurd,

is rejected, it ought to be examined, may lead young and inexperienced persons to venture upon investigations, which they may think themselves competent to conduct with safety, but by which their minds may be confused and finally poisoned, to the subversion of that settled belief which they had possessed in the unalterable principles of the Christian faith, and in the reality of the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. When such a state of unsettlement is once produced in minds which had before entertained no doubt respecting that precious faith, it may be totally out of the power of such, to restore the tranquillity and holy certainty which they had enjoyed.

The Christian has no right to tamper with the truths of divine revelation, or the peace which he has in believing them. He wants no other gospel but the gospel of the Lord Jesus and his apostles, as testified of in the Holy Scriptures. He that partaketh of the muddy streams of mystery Babylon, will thirst again after some other false theory or speculation; but our blessed Lord said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Here is your place of safety, dear young friends, in a holy reliance upon your omnipotent Saviour, who as you are faithful and chaste to him, will give you that saving faith, which is and ever has been the saint's victory over all the delusions and snares of the devil. Avoid listening to the sophistry of free thinkers and unbelievers, and refuse to read

any of those pernicious publications, that pretend to set forth new discoveries in religion, or in any wise assail the doctrines of Christianity, for they are the fruits of the clouded imaginations of bewildered men, who are deceivers and being deceived. “Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter—their wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.” Be frequent in reading the Holy Scriptures, and the approved writings of Friends, with minds turned to the Lord for the illumination of his Holy Spirit, and he will instruct and defend you; and as you persevere in following your Saviour, he will give you the bread of life and build you up upon the Rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

We feel tenderly solicitous on behalf of our beloved friends who are engaged in trade or business, and who, in pursuing the means of gaining an honest livelihood, are subjected to many difficulties. We believe the present is a day of peculiar temptation to such. Circumstances of latter time have combined to produce a state of extraordinary excitement among the trading community, and an active and eager competition, which is not scrupulous as to the means employed to invite and secure custom. Pressed by the manœuvres of this selfish and grasping spirit, and beholding the apparent success, which for a while is sometimes permitted to attend it, we fear lest any under our name, should yield to the temptation to resort to any artifices or plans, to enlarge their busi-

ness or to increase their profits, which are inconsistent with the law of universal righteousness, and thus destroy their peace of mind. Strict justice and honesty in all his dealings, and a conscientious observance of the great precept of our Holy Redeemer, "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also even so unto them," are the indispensable duty of the Christian; and the greatest pecuniary gain would be no compensation for the guilt, and the sore distress which sooner or later, must result from its violation.

The standard which the world adopts, and even defends, in its pursuit of trade and its desire to gather riches, is not a safe one for the disciple of Christ. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself;" and we sorrowfully see that this praise is often bestowed with but little regard to the means employed to acquire wealth. But we are taught by the Saviour himself, that "that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God," and we fear that it is true as respects some of the modes of conducting business, and many of the schemes for procuring money, which are resorted to in the present day. Earnestly do we desire that all our dear friends may be scrupulously on their guard, not to suffer their nice sense of Christian integrity to be blunted or benumbed by the examples which pass unreproved in the community, but steadily adhere to that strict uprightness, in all their transactions and converse, which becomes the disciple of Christ, and which so remarkably distinguished our worthy predecessors. How exact were they in the fulfilment of their words

and obligations! how careful to avoid all evasive and insincere dealings, and how conscientious not to engage in any thing of a doubtful or objectionable character. Their strictness in these respects gained for them and for our religious Society a high reputation, and the Lord blessed their honest endeavours so that they prospered in the world. May their noble example influence us of the present day to follow in their footsteps, that so our conduct may bring no shade over the brightness of our Christian profession, but that walking and acting in the holy light of the Lord Jesus, we may by our example, commend our principles to those who behold us, and experience in ourselves the truth of the Scripture declaration, "The path of the just man is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

It is a truth confirmed by the experience of many, that "godliness with contentment is great gain, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come;" and where the desires of the mind are circumscribed by the limitations of the holy Truth, there is more true enjoyment in a moderate business, and a moderate and simple way of living, than can be known by any of the sons or daughters of extravagance and folly. In this humble state, a little with the Lord's blessing satisfies its wants. Its peace and tranquillity in a reverent dependence upon God are preserved, and many sorrows and temptations are avoided. Redeemed from the love of the world, and the affections set on things above, it is jealous over itself, lest it

should become unduly occupied with the things of time, and rather shuns than seeks a large business; mainly desiring, that while diligent in the necessary concerns of life, it may be “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” The eye being thus kept single, it is favoured with divine light, clearly to discover the path which the Lord is calling to walk in, and freed from needless anxiety and care, and the cumber of much worldly business, its time and faculties are devoted, under the leadings of the good Shepherd, to the services of religious Society and the promotion of the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth.

We have abundant reason to assent to the truth of the declaration of the inspired apostle, “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” How many of this class in their haste to accomplish their favourite object, have launched out into large business, brought upon themselves a load of anxiety and care, which has deprived them of much of the comfort of life, wounded their own consciences, and done violence to the secret, gentle convictions of the Holy Spirit, and at last been bitterly disappointed, as regards the attainment of that which they have been so eagerly pursuing.

We believe the desire after large business is one of the besetting temptations of the present day, and we would affectionately entreat our members to beware of being caught with it. “ Seekest thou great things

for thyself, seek them not," is a language of Holy Scripture applicable, we believe, at this day, to every one who desires to be a partaker of the joys of the righteous. The happiness of man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth, but in the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and daily communion with Him. Trade, or business, or speculations in property, which hold out prospects of a rapid accumulation of riches, often destroy the tranquillity of the mind, and lead to perplexities which not only lessen the desire, but disqualify for a patient, humble dependence upon Him, who is the author of all our mercies, and whose blessing alone maketh truly rich. May none of our members involve themselves in worldly concerns of such magnitude, or of so absorbing a character, as to disqualify them for acting the part of faithful stewards to God, in the right use of their time, their talents, and the temporal substance intrusted to their care; or prevent them from being concerned, in all things to pass the time of their sojourning on earth in fear, and by daily watchfulness unto prayer, to have their lamps trimmed, and oil in their vessels, that when the solemn close of life shall come, they may be prepared, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, to enter into the joy of their Lord.

We affectionately desire that those who are made stewards over but a small portion of this world's goods, may be contented in the allotment which Divine Providence has assigned them, and whilst diligently pursuing a course of honest industry, observe the injunc-

tion of our holy Redeemer, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof;" in the undoubted assurance that the annexed promise will be fulfilled, "and all things necessary shall be added unto you." Seek not, we beseech you, by entering upon any undertakings into which the Truth does not lead you, to increase your earthly possessions; but having your eye fixed on the durable riches and righteousness that fade not away, endeavour to lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. He who feedeth the ravens and clothes the lilies of the field, will not fail, as you serve Him in uprightness, to grant you all that is necessary for your accommodation during the short period of your stay on earth, and also make you rich in faith, and heirs of the promises.

Those who are in more easy or in affluent circumstances have their peculiar temptations, and a weighty responsibility arising out of the trust committed to their care. They are stewards, who must give an account of the manner in which they use their temporal substance, which is not their own, but belongs to Him whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, to be used for his glory and the good of their fellow-creatures. We would encourage these carefully to cherish and practice a Christian liberality towards proper objects of benevolence, and to seek out and aid such, rather than hoard up for those who may come after them; the effect of which has often been injurious both to their temporal and spiritual welfare; and be fruitful in the good works produced by that faith which gives

the victory over the world. May a deep sense of these things so rest upon the minds of this class, that living in humility and godly fear, they may at last be prepared to render up their accounts with joy, and receive the answer of “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

As the true Christian life is the fruit of the inward sanctification of the heart by the spirit and power of Christ Jesus, so we believe that they who experience this blessed work in themselves, will be redeemed from the pride and vanity of the world, and the practices which grow out of them, and be brought into the simplicity and self-denial, enjoined by Him who was himself “meek and lowly of heart.” Minds which are happily bent upon seeking a more glorious and enduring inheritance than temporal enjoyments can give, will have little relish for the fashions, the grandeur, or the empty compliments of a world that lieth in wickedness, but will be striving to fulfil the injunction of the apostle, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God concerning you.”

But, dear friends, it is with sorrow we observe that many, under our name, in this day of outward ease and prosperity, wherein the means of indulging pride and ambition are easily obtained, have swerved from that Christian simplicity and plainness in habit, speech and deportment, and in the furniture of their houses and manner of living, which the gospel enjoins, and

which become men and women professing godliness. It is cause of grief and concern to faithful Friends, to observe how far these things are departed from, and what an increase of luxury, extravagance and vain show is to be seen among us.

Some, to excuse or palliate their departures in these respects, speak of them as "little things," and of small moment, thereby endeavouring to lower that standard of moderation and self-denial which is set before us in the Holy Scriptures, and which the Witness for Truth raised in the hearts of our forefathers, and still calls all to uphold. We believe that nothing can be called little which forms a part of our duty to God, and that the disposition to lessen these testimonies, as well as the unwillingness to conform to them, arise alike from the unsubdued will and unmortified pride of the human heart, which shuns the offence of the cross.

It is upon the simplicity of the Truth as it is in Jesus, whose whole life was one of contradiction to the grandeur and glory of this world, and on the heart changing nature of the religion which he introduced, that our testimony to plainness and moderation rests. And why is it, Friends, that you seek to be conformed to the world in these things, and to imitate its fashions and customs? Is it not to be like the people of the world; from a desire to emulate their style of living, and to escape that mortification which arises from being considered strict or narrow minded? We believe, if you would search closely into the secret motives

which lie at the bottom of such worldly compliances, you would find they had their origin in that love of the world, respecting which it is declared, that if any man indulge it, the love of the Father is not in him. Oh, then, dear friends, let us affectionately entreat you seriously to ponder the path you are pursuing, and inquire of the blessed witness for God in your own hearts, whether it is that strait and narrow way, which your dear Redeemer trod before you, who "set us an example that we should follow his steps." Suffer him, we beseech you, to arise in your hearts, and plead his own cause; and as you give yourselves up to his leading, He will bring you out of these indulgences into a conformity to his divine will, strengthening you, with holy magnanimity and firmness, to deny yourselves, and to despise the shame or the reproach which the ungodly world may attach to your humble, simple way of life, and give you to partake of that peace which is the enriching reward of obedience.

It is cause of concern to observe, that some who are themselves consistent in their personal appearance and deportment, have gone out into greater show and expense in the furniture of their houses and their style of living, than the proper sphere of the humble follower of Christ will justify. Besides the inconsistency of these departures, we would invite our dear friends to a serious consideration of the effects which such a course of life will be likely to have upon their beloved offspring. If they see the parents gratifying a vain mind in such

things, can it reasonably be expected that the children will be disposed to submit to the restraints of the cross in their dress and language; or will they not rather conclude, that if the other is allowed by the parents, the latter cannot be more inconsistent for them?

Such a mode of life, moreover, attracts a description of company which is not congenial to a growth in a religious life and conversation, and often opens a door for leading the young people into many hurtful things, which prove of lasting injury to their susceptible minds. We mourn over the effects which are already apparent in some places and families, and believe it is highly necessary that a living concern should be raised among us, to make a firm stand against the inroads of a worldly spirit in these respects. Copying after others in these things, and pleading the example of others to justify their own departures, or to silence the secret uneasiness raised by them in the mind, has been, we believe, a fruitful source of weakness and wrong compliance. The day calls loudly upon us to gather home into our own hearts, and consult the divine monitor there, which we have no doubt will bear a faithful testimony for Truth, and lead us to put away everything which is unbecoming the simplicity, lowliness and humility of the self-denying Christian.

When parents are primarily concerned to train up their children for heaven, rather than to gain for them

a character and standing among the rich, and popular, and honourable of this world, they will not only be engaged, like some of old, to bring them to Jesus, that they may learn of him, but will avail themselves of every means which may serve as a help in the early subjection of the will, and that discipline of the cross, which so essentially contribute to the future comfort of the child; and, like breaking up the fallow ground, prepare it for the reception of the heavenly seed. In this important work, the restraints of simplicity and plainness in habit, speech and demeanour, form important auxiliaries, curbing the proud and aspiring dispositions of youth, and serving as an important hedge about them, during a critical and exposed period of life. The same remarks may be made as respects a plain, simple mode of living, and the firm but gentle control which springs up in a well-regulated Christian family, the unspeakable benefits of which many have had gratefully to acknowledge in after years, as having been a means of preservation, however irksome they sometimes found them to their unsubjected tempers.

We wish seriously to call the attention of our members to a practice, which we fear is a growing evil, of collecting large companies of young people at the houses of Friends, where they are often detained until an unseasonable hour of the night, breaking in upon the order of a well-regulated family, and exposing the youth to many temptations. Such practices we believe are of very hurtful tendency, and require the vigilant care of well concerned parents and others, to check

and prevent them. How much of the demeanour and conversation which passes on such occasions, is of a very light and frivolous character, even if it be no worse; unworthy of beings endowed by a beneficent Creator with noble powers of mind, designed to be employed to his glory, and the good of each other, and wholly unbecoming the gravity of the Christian, who feels the responsibility of his high calling, and knows that for every idle word that men shall speak, they must give an account thereof in the day of judgment! How much idle curiosity and evil emulation are often awakened respecting the dress of individuals, and the character of the entertainment, each one trying to outvie others and set themselves off to advantage, while the excitement of mind and feelings which is produced, and the insincerity and display, prompted by the desire to please, are very uncongenial with the formation of a sound religious and moral character. The great end of society is mutual improvement and rational enjoyment, but we think there are few who attend these parties, but must acknowledge that they are far from being occasions of improvement, or of yielding the mind any calm, substantial pleasure. We hope the practice will claim the care of Friends, and that they will endeavour to produce a reformation therein.

Among the striking characteristics of the present day, are the instability and love of excitement which pervade the minds of the people. Many even among the professors of religion seem to be "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," looking abroad for

sources of gratification, and eagerly pursuing anticipated pleasures, instead of endeavouring to secure from the present hour as it passes, those tranquil enjoyments which are the fruit of well doing, and to cultivate that retirement and mental introversion, in which we may profitably commune with our own heart and be still. One of the effects of this state of unsettlement is the great increase of public amusements and pastimes, which has latterly become so obvious; for, as “the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing,” so when the mind is let out to seek gratification in these vanities, the desire for them increases with the indulgence; and it is constantly requiring new objects to please the senses, and to fill the aching void which they leave behind them. Often, after having run the giddy round, in the vain pursuit of pleasure, there is a secret sense of bitter disappointment, and a consciousness that these empty trifles cannot satisfy the longings of an immortal mind, designed for nobler and purer enjoyments.

We apprehend that many of the lectures and readings, with other kindred exhibitions, are of latter time so mixed up with improper associations, that parents and others have need to be on their guard, lest in going themselves, or allowing their children to attend, they should be promoting a dissipation of mind, and an exposure to hurtful influences, the consequences of which may be lastingly and injuriously felt. To say nothing of the more objectionable kinds of diversion, it is often the case that pastimes and shows, which seem at first

view to be of a more innocent character, when they are strictly inquired into, are found to be attended with accompaniments which are not such as a Christian ought to countenance; and we believe there is, at the present time particularly, great need for all to be studiously watchful, how they give way to the solicitation to attend on such occasions, lest they baulk our religious profession, encourage wrong things, and thereby wound and weaken their own minds.

Another great evil of the present time, is the flood of light literature pouring almost daily from the press. Many of the publications, even some that profess to be promotive of morality, are of a mixed character, truth and fiction being artfully blended together, and an attraction thrown around the whole which easily captivates the unguarded. It is cause of regret to observe books of this description upon the tables of some of our members, and we fear the perusal of them, and the taste for this flimsy and pernicious reading, are on the increase. We believe its tendency is decidedly evil, creating a disrelish for the practical duties and sober realities of life, dissipating the energies of the mind, and habituating it to a state of excitement, which is unfavourable to calm and serious reflection. It creates moreover a distaste for profitable reading, and a morbid appetite for that which stimulates the imagination, rendering religious meditation and solid thoughtfulness irksome and repulsive. We affectionately exhort all our members, not only to avoid such reading themselves, but to discountenance it in others, and especially to restrain the children and youth from

the pernicious effects of this practice, endeavouring to cultivate in their minds a love for instructive reading, and such as will lead to the contemplation of heavenly things.

We would also renewedly caution all our members against indulging in music, or having instruments of music in their houses, believing that the practice tends to promote a light and vain mind, and to disqualify for the serious thoughtfulness, which becomes an accountable being, hastening to his final reckoning. When we consider that our days pass swiftly away, and that our time is one of the talents committed to our trust, for the employment of which, we shall have to render an account in the day of judgment, it becomes us to be living as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, seeking a better country, and to be diligently using it for the great end for which it is lent to us, even in working out the soul's salvation in fear and trembling, and not in vain amusements, or corrupting pleasures, but striving that "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God;" that "God in all things may be glorified by us through Jesus Christ our Lord."

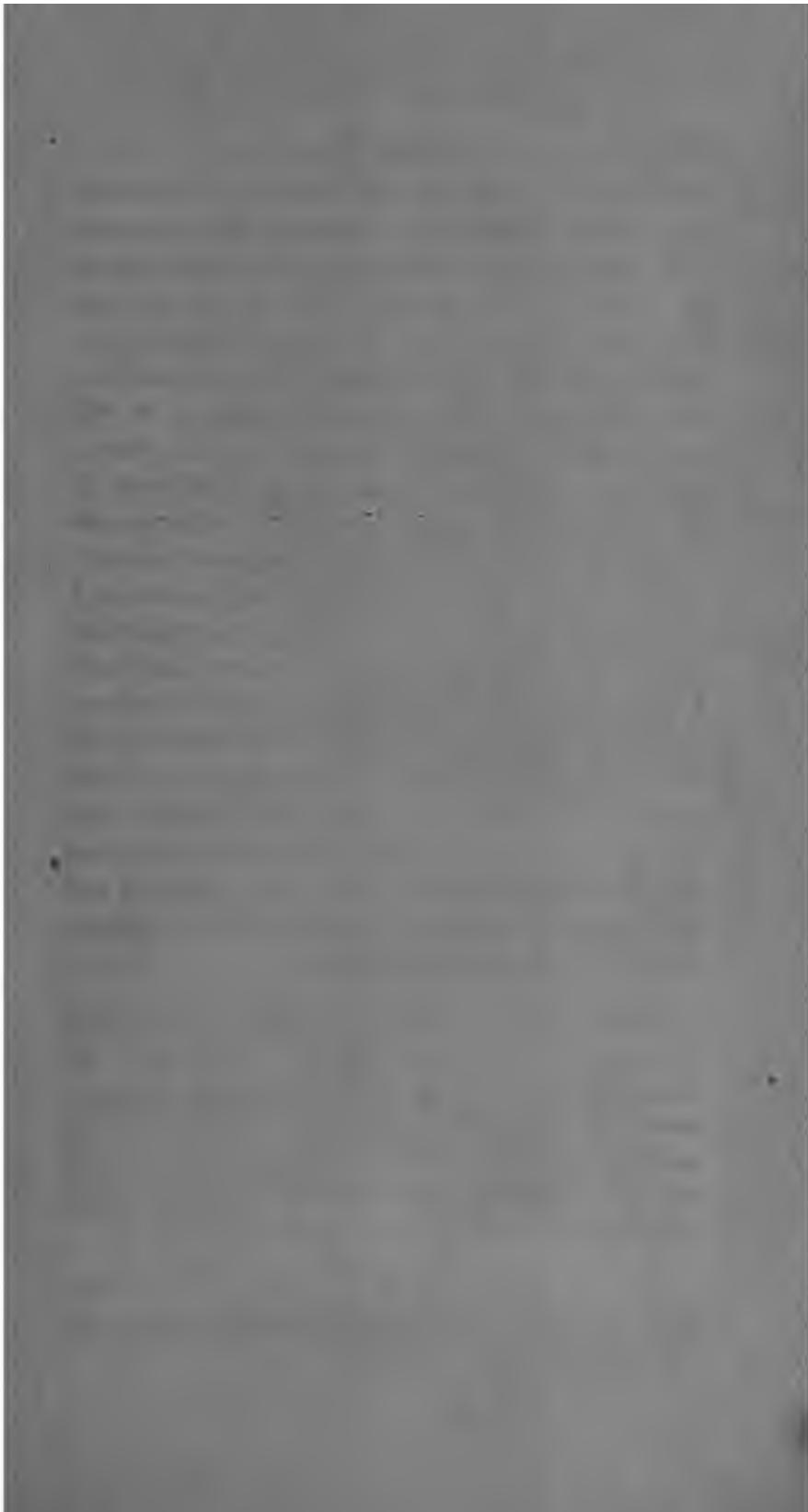
Having thus endeavoured in the feeling of gospel love for our brethren and sisters, to bring into view the different subjects that have claimed our serious consideration, which we believe are connected with their welfare and growth in the Truth, and being sensible that many deficiencies and weaknesses exist among us, we desire that each one may humble him-

self before the Lord, and seek for ability to lay aside those things which the testimony of Truth is manifestly against, and to come up in greater dedication to the Lord's will and service. His mercies are new every morning, and with Him there is plenteous redemption that he may be feared. If those who have been unfaithful to him, turn at his reproofs, he will pass by their transgressions and love them freely; and by the humbling baptisms of his Holy Spirit, fit them for the work he appoints for his obedient children in his church. Notwithstanding the degeneracy that has overtaken many, we believe there is a renewed call extended to us, to leave the things that are behind and to lay hold of the offers of his mercy and holy help, and he will qualify us to build up the waste places, to declare of his goodness and long forbearance, and to draw the children by precept and example to take the yoke of Christ upon them, and follow him. Hereby they will know the work of their salvation to be carried on with the day, and we may hope that the Society will again be raised up into the brightness and dignity in which it was originally gathered.

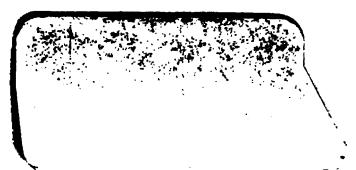
“Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen.”

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Yearly meeting;

WILLIAM EVANS, *Clerk this year.*







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An epistle of affectionate caution

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